

## ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

**style:** the way a particular work is written—not what is said, but *how* it is said

**sentence structure or syntax:** the arrangement of words in a sentence. Many writers have a distinct syntax, as shown by their use of simple or complicated sentences in either subject-verb order or inverted order.

**word choice:** the type of language an author uses—such as formal or informal, precise or abstract, neutral or moody, imagery, musical effects, and so on

**tone:** the attitude a writer takes toward a subject

## HERE'S HOW

**Step 1: Examine word choice.** How precise is it? What are the images? Is the level of language formal or informal?

**Step 2: Look for patterns or variety in sentence structure.** Ask yourself: Does the writer use *mainly* simple sentences? *Mainly* complex sentences? A wide variety of sentence types and lengths? Any fragments?

**Step 3: Evaluate how word choice and sentence structure affect tone.** Does the passage convey a casual tone? A serious tone? A humorous tone? A pitying tone? A critical tone? Describe the attitude in the words.

**Step 4: Compare and contrast the style with other texts.** Ask yourself: How is this style similar to that of other authors? How is it different? Two writers may both use a literary style, but their styles may vary in imagery, sound effects, organization, sentence structure, tone or other elements.

## EXAMPLE

**Formal:** The pleasure of your company is requested at a gala birthday celebration on 5 June at 8 P.M. in honor of Mr. Jon Westerby III.

**Informal:** Hey, we're having a birthday bash for our bud Jon. Saturday night. June 5, at 8. Be there or be square!

**Journalistic:** A birthday party for Jon Westerby will be held on Saturday, June 5, at 8 P.M. Distinguished guests have been invited to honor him.

**Literary:** Should you like to salute the birth of our dear friend Jon, the master of hi-jinks, join us at a festive fete in his honor. It will be held when the clock strikes eight on June 5.

uses sophisticated, abstract words and complex sentences; has a serious tone

uses simple sentences, slang, and contractions; has a casual, conversational tone

uses neutral words and straightforward sentence structure to report the facts; has an objective, neutral tone

uses imagery, figurative language, and varies sentence structure; tone depends on character and author's purpose